

identify food allergy and food sensitivity is beneficial. There is a phenomenon on the increase over the past ten years called “pseudo food allergy.” The condition is characterized by self-diagnosis of food allergy and intolerance in the absence of medical expertise.

Table 2  
Advantages in-vitro testing

Patient safety Cost effective Many allergens tested Not affected by medications No irritating skin reactions Sets safe starting dose for immunotherapy
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Once the problematic allergens have been identified a treatment plan can be developed. Dietary manipulation by elimination of reactive foods or simple rotation diets is most beneficial. This can lead to a resolution of symptoms and help avoid nutritional deficiencies. Consult with an experienced dietician who understands food allergies so they can help your patients to make the proper choices for menus and recipes.

Other treatment strategies include sublingual immunotherapy also known as SLIT. Specialized protocols<sup>3</sup> are now available that base dosing on the patient’s degree of sensitivity. SLIT treatment provides for the gradual de-sensitization to the offending food, so that these foods can be gradually reintroduced around 3-6 months. Specific IgE and IgG levels are monitored during treatment to safely adjust the strength of treatment and to monitor progress. In the short term, the goal of food SLIT is to relieve the symptoms associated with food allergy such as chronic urticaria, or frequent ear infections. Over the longer term, up to 2-3 years, the goal is to develop long-term tolerance so that small amounts of the offending food can be tolerated and symptoms do not re-occur. SLIT offers a treatment option that is efficacious, safe, convenient and cost effective and offers the potential to modify the disease to prevent onset of more serious symptoms.

Technologies are improving so clinical laboratories’ results are now more reliable and reproducible than in the past, but all labs are not created equal. Clinicians should know the limitations of their test and not over-interpret test results. Patient results should always be interpreted carefully with respect to patient history and physical exam.

There are several important studies underway that will

help doctors understand more about the mechanisms of food allergy and benefits of treatment with the hope to improve patient outcomes. Stay tuned, since this is an area of medicine that is changing rapidly, to the potential benefit of millions of patients affected by food allergy diseases.

**References**

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